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GRAVEST CRISIS IN HISTORY CONFRONTS AMERICAN RAILWAYS

WAR HAS CLOSED FINANCIAL MARKETS OF EUROPE TO THEM INDEFINITELY.

In view of the fact that the railroads of Kansas have filed an application for an increase in passenger rates before the State Public Utilities Commission, it is their desire to utilize this occasion for an intimate and frank discussion of the whole railroad question with the people of the state. To this end, the careful attention of the reader is invited to a series of articles which will appear in this newspaper during the next few weeks. All that is asked is that the people of Kansas, whose broadmindedness is a byword throughout the country, do the railroads the justice to listen to their side of the story—and then form such conclusions as they think the facts warrant.

That the railroads of the United States are today confronted by the gravest crisis in their history there is not the slightest question. For some years they have been desperately struggling with an ever-increasing cost of operation in the face of reduced freight and passenger rates—but serious as this situation was before, the European war, which has indefinitely closed to them the foreign money markets, has suddenly brought them face to face with a situation which threatens not merely many new receiverships, but the actual paralysis of the entire transportation industry of the nation. It was this state of affairs which compelled the closing of the New York Stock Exchange some months ago. What will happen when it opens only the future can tell. American railroads are valued in round figures at twenty billion dollars, and of this vast sum nearly five billion dollars' worth of securities are held abroad. Should Europe, in its frantic struggle for funds, seek to convert these securities into ready gold when the Stock Exchange opens, as it did before it closed, where are the railroads to get the money with which to buy them? And if they haven't the money, what demoralization will follow not merely in railroad securities, but in all other great American industrial values as well?

PRESIDENT WILSON'S VIEWS.
That the situation is profoundly serious is manifested by the recent utterance of President Wilson to a group of Eastern railroad executives. In his letter to Mr. Trumbull of the Chesapeake & Ohio he said:
"You ask me to call the attention of the country to the imperative need that railway credits be sustained and the railroads helped in every possible way, whether by private co-operative effort or by the action wherever feasible of governmental agencies, and I am glad to do so, because I think the need is very real."

"They are indispensable to our whole economic life, and railway securities are at the very heart of most investments, large and small, public and private, by individuals and by institutions."

"I am confident there will be earnest and active co-operation in this matter, perhaps the one common interest of our whole industrial life."

"Undoubtedly men, both in and out of official position, will appreciate what is involved and lend their aid heartily wherever it is possible for them to lend it. But the emergency is in fact extraordinary and where there is manifest common interest we ought all of us to speak out in its behalf, and I am glad to join you in calling attention to it. This is the effort for all to stand together in united effort to comprehend every interest and serve and sustain it in every legitimate way."

RAILROADS LOST MILLIONS.
The net operating income of the railroads of the United States for the year ending June 30, 1914, was \$120,000,000 less than for the previous year. The gross earnings for the year were \$44,000,000 less than for 1913—while expenses and taxes were \$76,000,000 more. But heavy as this burden was before, the great struggle across the seas, carrying in its wake the destruction of untold hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of all kinds of property, renders the situation a thousandfold more serious. It means, in short, that for a number of years to come Europe will have no surplus money for investment in the United States or elsewhere, and that American railroads will have to finance their future needs at home. How Herculean this task will be, saying nothing about protecting themselves against the dumping of foreign securities, may be judged from the fact that the bond and note obligations which will mature between now and the end of next year and which the railroads will have to meet in some way amount to more than \$565,000,000—and this doesn't take a dollar's worth of new improvements or betterments into consideration. These are obligations which were incurred in the past and which must be met as they fall due if the transportation companies are to be preserved from wholesale receiverships and ruin.

Manifestly, therefore, American investors, big and little, will have to come to the rescue—and before they will consent to do this American railroad securities will have to be re-established as a sound, respected and paying investment—and this, on the basis of present railroad earnings, is

impossible. For this reason the railroads of Kansas believe the impending crisis demands that they lay their whole problem before the people of the entire state—that they have a heart-to-heart talk with the farmer, the banker, the laboring man, and all other citizens, upon this great question which so vitally affects the future welfare of the commonwealth.

WHY RAILROADS ARE HELPLESS.
In times of acute financial stress, private industries are in position to very largely adjust their affairs to meet the emergency. They can advance the price of their commodities, cut their pay roll in half, or shut down altogether and thus permit the storm to blow over without actual shipwreck. The railroads as quasi-public enterprises, however, are in an entirely different position. Their rates are regulated by law and cannot be advanced without the consent of the people through their law making bodies. In order to please the convenience of the public and not to break down the commerce of the country they must operate their freight trains at a loss, and in view of the fact that a full load or only a quarter of a load—and in view of these facts, it is manifestly unfair to put the railroads in the same class with private industries in the present crisis and ask them to shift for themselves as best they can. When the people took over the complete making and regulation of railroad rates, they at the same time assumed the solemn financial obligation to see that the railroads get a square deal—for this is the only power which stands between them and ruin.

We believe every intelligent citizen will agree with the statement that the railroads cannot get along without the patronage and, what is equally essential, the good will of the people. That some of those who have been entrusted with railroad management in the past are somewhat responsible for the apparent gulf between the public and the transportation companies is perhaps true. Busy and harassed by the Herculean tasks entrusted to their care, there has been too little contact between them and the people. Again, it is undoubtedly true that the world of railroad finance as well as other lines of industrial activity has had its share of inexcusable abuses—but just as the public does not hold the banking world or the ministry responsible as a whole for the shortcomings of an occasional black sheep, so the hundreds of honest railroad officials throughout the country should not be condemned because of the misdeeds of the few.

WHO OWNS THE RAILROADS?
In this connection it may be said that the railroad world is encumbered with a lot of phantoms which exist only in the popular fancy. For instance, because there have been some half dozen so-called railroad magnates whose names have figured prominently in Wall street, many people have come to believe that the railroads of the country are largely owned by few rich men. As a matter of fact, nothing could be farther from the truth. Out of the colossal sum of twenty billion dollars invested in American railroad securities less than 5 per cent is now, or ever has been, in the hands of these men who have figured prominently in the newspaper headlines while the rest of the ownership is in the hands of nearly two million investors, large and small, who in many instances have put the modest savings of a lifetime into these securities in the order that they might lay away a competency for old age.

When, therefore, the value of these securities is depressed, or perchance destroyed, the hardship is tenfold increased upon the thousands of every-day citizens—upon the frugal mechanic in a New England factory, the widow with her life insurance funds, and the countless other citizens in every vocation and condition of life who have invested in the railroads. The railroads are in the hands of nearly two million investors, large and small, who in many instances have put the modest savings of a lifetime into these securities in the order that they might lay away a competency for old age.

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During the next few weeks we promise the reader the most intimate and far-reaching discussion of the railroad question that has ever appeared in the public press, and we trust that by thinking things over in the quiet of their homes, and by reading what is said carefully, the facts and figures given will be based upon public records, and hence easily capable of verification. Especially we ask that farmers whose market facilities and land values are so vitally affected by the railroad problem will follow the "Commons" articles closely—for agriculture and transportation are easily the nation's two greatest and most fundamental industries.

(To be continued.)

NOT A LOST ART!

Students of Today Spell as Well as Those of 1850.

But Method Is Wrong; Topeka System Being Changed.

PUPILS LEARN FEWER WORDS

Only Those in Ordinary Vocabulary To Be Retained.

Several Topeka Business Men Resort to Rubber Stamps.

"Dictated but not revised!" Several Topeka business men in their hurry to get out their correspondence each day use a rubber stamp as a form of apology in case of errors in spelling.

ductile
commutator
synecdoche
amphibious
desuetude
infrangible
hierodule
terrestrial
consanguinity
etymology

Trying to learn these words While still misspelling these.

And one naturally asks for an explanation. Is spelling a lost art? Is the system of teaching spelling ineffective, or does the fault rest with the individuals in the schools? These are questions being asked by Topeka business men.

"The situation is serious," said one Topeka business man today. "It is difficult to find stenographers who can spell, and the hundreds of honest business men who are harassed by the Herculean tasks entrusted to their care, there has been too little contact between them and the people. Again, it is undoubtedly true that the world of railroad finance as well as other lines of industrial activity has had its share of inexcusable abuses—but just as the public does not hold the banking world or the ministry responsible as a whole for the shortcomings of an occasional black sheep, so the hundreds of honest railroad officials throughout the country should not be condemned because of the misdeeds of the few."

Change in Topeka.
But the method of teaching spelling in the Topeka schools is being materially changed. Lists of words, which are in the vocabulary of an average person, have been compiled and are now being used by the teachers of the second and third grades. Committees of members of the teaching staff of the city schools are preparing additional lists for the upper grades and they will be ready for use by the second semester.

Business Course Strengthened.
Furthermore the business course in the high school is being strengthened. "We expect to do as good work in the commercial department of the high school as can be produced in any business college," said Superintendent Wilson.

In the grades the spelling of many words that are not in the vocabulary of the ordinary business man has been insisted upon in the past. There are between 10,000 and 15,000 words in Rathburn's Graded Speller used in the local schools, while not more than 2,000 or 3,000 words are in ordinary business correspondence. For example, there are such words in the speller as consanguinity, desuetude, synecdoche, etc.

Interesting Investigations.
Recently the division of education of the Russell Sage Foundation conducted a study of the vocabularies of 2,000 short business and personal letters. The object was to find out whether or not there exists a fairly definite body of words so generally used in ordinary correspondence that they should form the basis of the spelling vocabulary taught in the lower grades of the elementary schools. In a pamphlet dealing with this investigation by Dr. Leonard P. Ayres the following summary is given: "On the completion of the work it was found that while the aggregate number of entries was 23,623, there were so many duplicates that the total number of individual words employed was only 2,001. In making the tabulation of names of numbers, persons and places were omitted. An analysis of the final results shows that 751 of the words appeared only once each, while one of them was repeated 1,080 times."

Dr. W. Franklin Jones, head of the department of education, University of South Dakota, in a pamphlet entitled "Concrete Investigation of the Material of English Spelling," tells of an examination made of 75,000 thesauri averaging 130 words each. The themes aggregated 15,000,000 words, counting each word as many times as it appeared, but the total number of different words was but 4,522. The themes were written by 1,550 students. Tests have been given that were submitted to students more than fifty years ago, and indicate that students of today are better spellers than those of more than a half century ago, but still have not attained to a proper degree of efficiency.

In the course of study for the first semester, 1914-1915 in the Topeka grade schools—a forty-eight page booklet—Superintendent Wilson makes suggestions to the teachers in respect to the practical method of handling the spelling work. Superintendent Wilson says in part: "Throughout our work, we are not to forget that the ultimate purpose in teaching spelling is that each child shall write correctly; not in columns, but in sentences and paragraphs. 'Social standards' rightly demand that one shall spell accurately the

words constituting his composing vocabulary. In so far as this vocabulary is developed in the schools, the schools should be held responsible for the training of the children in its correct spelling. The inaccurate spelling of common words rightly stamps one as illiterate, and frequent errors in spelling are positive evidence of carelessness and low ideals."

"Society very properly expects that the schools shall teach the accurate spelling of as many common words as possible, but, more than this, society expects the public schools to develop in their output such a spelling conscience as will render it impossible for a graduate of the elementary public schools to write a word of the spelling of which he is not certain without first consulting the dictionary to ascertain the correct spelling. Both eye, ear and muscles should become so sensitive that incorrect or questionable spelling is painful and repugnant."

Selecting Words.
"The accomplishment of the above end requires on the part of the schools in the first place, the adoption of definite plans for the selection of words that the pupils shall learn to spell. Since there is no need to know the spelling of any word except those the children are capable of employing intelligently in a context, this test should be applied in the de-

termination of the spelling lists from day to day and from week to week. "Guard against trying to do too much and we shall succeed in doing more. It is a serious mistake to feel that the schools should attempt to teach the child to spell about all of the words any person is ever called upon to use. Rather, we should keep in mind the importance of teaching him to spell accurately the words he employs commonly in his own writing. The spelling of geographical and historical names and of the technical terms in connection with the regular work of the teaching of the lesson, the teacher should test for the mastery of such spelling. Many of the more common of these words may need to be carried over from the lessons in which they occur for special study and drill in the regular spelling

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and past officer guard. He was at one time a Silver Republican. Albert McClain was one-fourth Pottawatomie and in the struggling days of the territory was acquainted with John Brown and Quantrell. He had been sick three years and died early Thursday morning. Mr. McClain had lived at the Hartman residence, on Lawrence street, for 22 years. When President Taft was here for the dedication of Memorial hall, he had charge of all the old soldiers.

ELECTRIC TO TOPEKA.

Extension of Helm Line to Lawrence Immediately.

The extension of the Kansas City and Bonner Springs electric line to Lawrence will be completed by December 25, according to J. J. Helm, owner of the Bonner line. Cars will be operated between Kansas City and Lawrence by that time. When the line is completed as far as Lawrence plans will be made to build to Topeka. This was the gist of an interview given out by Mr. Helm in Kansas City today.

The Kansas City-Topeka electric line appears to be more of a reality now than it did when the matter was first talked of several years ago.

Trickler's TOPEKA BUSINESS COLLEGE

Miss Cassie Matthews has accepted a stenographic position with the Hall Stationery Co. Temporary work is being done by Miss Pearson for the Tri-County Oil and Gas Co.

Mr. Utech has taken a position as bookkeeper with the White Insurance agency. Young people are realizing more and more the value of a business training and are improving the time by attending night school. This accounts for the large attendance in our night school.

The Capital Iron Works needed a good stenographer, they secured the services of Miss Garner.

Miss Walter writes that she is getting along very nicely with her work at Norton, Kansas.

Misses Caulsen and Farmer have been doing temporary work for the Central Real Estate Dealers association.

Mr. Evans is doing stenographic work for the A. W. Bronson Mortgage and Debiture Co.

Miss Christy is now stenographer for Mote & Rooney, Lawyers.

Miss Leach is doing stenographic work for the Kaw Valley State bank at Wamego, Kansas.

The Independent Oil Co., of Marysville, Kansas, called for a good stenographer to take charge of their office. Miss Sinn, one of our students from Riley, Kansas, is filling the position.

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